

# **COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM**

## **TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM**

April 16, 2008 Conference Call

### **FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS**

Facilitator: Robin Gumpert

The following notes are a summary of issues that are intended to point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the "record" of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.

#### **Dworshak Operations Discussion**

Cathy Hlebechuk, COE, reported that Dworshak was currently at elevation 1487.4 feet, below the flood control elevation of 1493.7 feet. The project was operating at full load and she requested input from the salmon managers on how to proceed from here. Paul Wagner, NOAA, on behalf of the salmon managers recommended that the COE continue operating with the current full powerhouse operation and check in again next week to determine next steps. He suggested that the likely recommendation will be to keep the flows high until the freshet arrives. Cathy said the COE will provide an analysis to determine the feasibility of operating with that assumption.

**Action:** The COE will continue operating Dworshak at current full powerhouse outflows and TMT will revisit the issue at their 4/23 TMT meeting.

#### **John Day Spill Operations**

Dan Feil, COE, reminded everyone that, due to a delay in delivery of equipment, the original start date for the John Day TSW test on 4/21 would be delayed until 4/26 or 4/27. The COE's current plan was to maintain the pre-test condition of 0 daytime/60% nighttime spill until the test start, and then move to 24-hour spill at 30%. He noted that the Fish Operations Plan states that the test will start on or near 4/20 to begin the research. This issue had been discussed at the last TMT meeting and Paul Wagner suggested the issue be revisited due to questions about the start date for 30% spill.

Paul Wagner, NOAA, shared that since the FOP was written, folks reviewed modeled test patterns and all agreed that a 30% pattern with TSWs would provide better fish passage conditions than 0/60%. He expressed some frustration on behalf of the fisheries managers with the delay in the start of the test, and shared their desire to start spilling at 30% on 4/21.

BPA responded that the Fish Operations Plan describes John Day operations to continue at 0/60 until the start of the test, and that the test should start when significant numbers of fish are passing (historically on or near 4/20). Given that the proposed start date of 4/21 would be a deviation from the FOP, he asked for biological information that would support this deviation, particularly what passage numbers and types of fish were currently in the river. Paul responded that the migration had begun and that, historically, the first

10% of the fish pass during the week of 4/20; he noted that these were an important part of the run. Specifically, yearling chinook counts at Bonneville were 3,300 and numbers at John Day were 14,000. Dave Wills, USFWS, offered that the discrepancy in the two numbers was due to releases from several hatcheries.

Mike Langsley, Portland District COE, shared information from past TSW studies that, with 30% spill, yearling chinook passage ranged from 56-47% and steelhead ranged from 55-54%. He noted that the fish run does appear to be ramping up, and as part of the group that reviewed spill pattern modeling, he suggested that 30% spill would provide better egress for passage. He reported that a balloon tag test was conducted earlier this month and its results indicated that safe passage is anticipated with the TSW.

Finally, it was clarified that the change to the FOP was being recommended based on new available information that came out after the FOP was written. (Spill patterns had not been developed until February), so this change would be under the purview of in-season adaptive management.

TMT members present during today's meeting offered their responses:

- Idaho: Support the proposed operation and appreciate BPA's willingness to move forward with the proposal. Russ Kiefer also noted that FPOM had discussed this issue and all the fisheries managers agreed that a 30% start date on 4/21 was acceptable and that there would be concerns with delaying that spill pattern, given the new information from the models.
- USFWS: Support the recommendation and appreciate the discussion.
- NOAA: Support the recommendation and appreciate the change.
- BOR: No objection to starting 30% spill on 4/21.
- BPA: Will not object, and noted a preference to initiate the change when significant numbers of fish arrive at the project.
- COE: Support the proposed operation and noted that this recommendation would likely reduce TDG levels in the river, as an added benefit. The COE will be able to implement as follows:
  - On the morning of 4/21 (Monday), open the TSW and arrive at 30% spill by 6:00 pm.

**Action:** Jim Adams, COE, will contact TMT members that were not present during the meeting (Montana, Oregon and Washington) to get confirmation of support/no objection to move forward. Jim will email TMT to notify of their confirmations. The COE will need to prepare a memo for their attorneys describing the operation and biological rationale. Paul Wagner will provide input on the rationale, in writing.

### **Spring Creek Hatchery Release**

Dave Wills, USFWS, reported that on 4/10, 4 million fish were released from the Spring Creek Hatchery to coincide with start of spill. Per agreement with BPA and the COE, Powerhouse 2 at Bonneville was operated to the lower end of 1% to support passage. 95% passage occurred and the lower end of 1% constraint was lifted. The COE was scheduled to install acoustics equipment at the project today (see next agenda item) so

would continue running only two units, and would resume normal operations after today. The next hatchery release was scheduled for May. Dave suggested that the USFWS would likely make the same request for operating at the lower end of 1% for that release, and would have discussions about this off line with the COE and BPA.

**Action:** Dave will share resulting information from the release with TMT at the 4/23 meeting.

### **B2CC Outage**

Dan Feil, COE, followed up from the last TMT meeting and reported that full concurrence was reached at FPOM to allow a one day corner collector outage to install acoustics in the forebay at Bonneville. As such, the COE planned to operate units 14 and 18 during installation. It was clarified that FPOM agreed to a 12 hour window for completion of the installation, in the event that an issue came up requiring some of the work to be split into two days. Still, the COE planned to complete the work by 6:00 pm today, 4/16, then would resume corner collector and B2 turbine unit operations. Dan added that gateway testing would be occurring as well.

**Action:** Dan will talk with Dennis Schwartz, COE, to get feedback on the study and add this to the Spring Creek Hatchery release agenda during the 4/23 TMT meeting.

### **Transportation Operations**

Dan Feil also reminded TMT that the COE needs a three day notice to begin transportation operations and would like to know the planned date sooner than later. Paul Wagner responded that the planning date from the salmon managers at this time is May 1, and that if conditions change and prompt an earlier recommended start date, they would give direct notice to Dan via email.

**Action:** TMT will check in on this item at the 4/23 TMT meeting.

### **McNary Navigation Issue**

Jim Adams, COE, reported that an email had been sent to TMT members notifying them that a modified spill pattern had been sent to McNary to address navigational safety issues. The Walla Walla District COE worked with Towboaters and NOAA to develop an acceptable pattern, which was similar to the pattern used last year to address the same issue. Operators were given the new spill pattern and told to employ it as requested for 15-30 minutes to allow safe passage of boats. The operation was implemented and Jim Adams was notified that the first towboat to use the modified spill pattern reported that it worked well. The Towboaters thanked all who were involved for their good work pulling the spill pattern together as quickly as they did.

### **Next TMT Meeting: April 23<sup>rd</sup> 9am**

Agenda Items include:

- Priest Rapids Update
- Dworshak Operations
- Spring Creek Hatchery Release

- Transportation Operations
- Little Goose Nighttime Spill Operations
- TMT Guidelines
- Water Management Plan Spring/Summer Update
- Operations Review

**Columbia River Regional Forum  
Technical Management Team Conference Call  
April 16, 2008**

***1. Introduction***

Today's TMT call was chaired by Jim Adams (COE) and facilitated by Robin Gumpert (D.S. Consulting). Representatives of BPA, COE, NOAA, USFWS, BOR, Idaho and others were on the line. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at the meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should provide them to the TMT chair or bring them to the next meeting.

***2. Dworshak Operations***

The project is currently running at full load, with an elevation of 1,477.4 feet and an end-of-month flood control target of 1493.7 feet. Cathy Hlebechuk (COE) asked the Salmon Managers what type of operation they would recommend at this point. The consensus at FPAC yesterday was to maintain the current discharge at full powerhouse capacity and check in next week to see if flows need to be changed, Paul Wagner (NOAA) said. Fish are beginning to move, and the long-term plan is to maintain high flows until the freshet hits. The COE needs to analyze how long outflows can be kept at around 10 kcfs, Hlebechuk said. For now, the operation will continue at around 10 kcfs outflows (actually 10.9 kcfs at present) for the next week until TMT meets again April 23.

***3. John Day Spill Operations***

This item was added to today's agenda at the request of Paul Wagner (NOAA) on behalf of the Salmon Managers. The Fish Operations Plan states that research at John Day to evaluate the newly installed TSWs will begin on or around April 20; however, equipment and installation delays have moved that date back to April 26, Dan Feil (COE) reported. The COE had initially planned to continue the zero daytime/60% nighttime spill regime until testing begins. Recently the technical team reached a solid consensus recommendation on 30% spill round the clock beginning April 21 as it provided the best egress conditions in the model, Wagner explained. This recommendation was the result of several modeling trips to Mississippi to address eddies that formed at 60% spill, which would cause egress to take twice as long at 60% spill than at 30% spill. Wagner requested that 30% spill begin April 21 as the COE had initially planned.

Tony Norris (BPA) asked about the size and timing of this year's anticipated migration. Wagner and Mike Langeslay (COE) both noted that approximately 10% of the yearling, Chinook and subyearling runs historically pass John Day during the last week of April. Norris asked what percentage of fish would use the spillway route at 30% spill vs. 60% spill. Historical rates indicate

that 47-56% of Chinook and around 55% of steelhead used the spillway at 30% spill, Mike Langeslay (COE) said. In the past, 30% spill for 24 hours a day didn't necessarily increase spillway passage, perhaps due in part to the reluctance of steelhead to pass at 30% spill.

Rudd Turner (COE) asked about biological safety of the TSWs if they are going to be operated prior to testing. A balloon tag test in early April found that the TSWs are equivalent to a standard spill bay, with 99% survival for both, Langeslay said. While the TSWs are believed to be very safe, the effect of the new spill pattern on fish is not yet known. The spill pattern was developed after the Fish Operations Plan was written, so the request to deviate from specifications in the FOP is the result of new information.

Norris asked about fish survival rates at 30% spill compared to 60% spill. We don't have any direct data to indicate that one is better than the other because neither operation has been tested with its respective spill pattern, Feil replied. Rudd Turner asked whether the Salmon Managers expected any 40% spill; Wagner said no, the request is for 30% spill only. Norris requested the consideration that with such unusually low fish numbers at this time that the decision to begin be triggered on when we see an upturn in the actual fish numbers, given that temperatures this year have been unusually cold. Langeslay said the smolt index is largely driven by hatchery releases, making it consistent from year to year despite temperature changes. It will take project staff most of a day to get the TSWs open and running, Feil said, which makes short-term planning difficult. Project staff needs 1-2 days' advance notice to plan for opening the TSW, Turner said.

The COE proposed to operate John Day Dam at 30% spill for 24 hours a day beginning April 21 at 6 PM through 6 am on April 26 when the actual test begins. Because this operation is a departure from the FOP, it requires TMT consensus. Representatives from Oregon, Washington and Montana were not present on today's call. Adams will contact them and send an email to TMT stating each of their positions on the proposed operation. TMT members present today voted as follows:

- BPA supported the proposed operation but noted that this was an expensive operation especially considering that fish were not passing in significant numbers.
- BOR did not object.
- Idaho favored the proposed operation and voiced appreciation for BPA's willingness to compromise.
- USFWS supported the change and expressed appreciation for BPA's consideration.
- NOAA and the COE also supported the 30% spill operation.

Barring an objection by any of the missing state representatives today, John Day operation will proceed as follows: 60% spill from 6 pm on April 20 to 6 am on April 21, then zero spill while project crews work to have the TSW bays open and operating at 6 pm on April 21 using the new 30% spill pattern, which will continue until 6 am April 26.

*{Note: Subsequent to the conference call, Dan Feil contacted Jim Litchfield (Montana), Rick Kruger (Oregon), Cindy LeFleur (Washington), and Tom Lorz (CRITFC) regarding the proposed operation. All four supported the proposed operation and gave the Corps the go-ahead to initiate the 30% operation at 6:00 pm on Monday April 21<sup>st</sup>}*

#### **4. Spring Creek Hatchery Release**

On April 10, Spring Creek Hatchery released a little over 4 million fish, Dave Wills (USFWS) reported. To accommodate their passage through the Bonneville 2<sup>nd</sup> powerhouse, the turbine units were operated toward the low end of the 1% range. Based on combined passage counts, it appears that 95% of these fish have now passed Bonneville Dam, so today the COE is installing equipment in the forebay on the Bonneville 2<sup>nd</sup> powerhouse and running only two units, 14 and 18, at the low end of 1%. When installation is complete this afternoon, the project will resume normal operations outlined in the fish passage plan.

The last 2008 Spring Creek Hatchery release of approximately 3.5 million fish will occur in early May. There will probably be a request to operate the turbines at the low end of 1% efficiency for that release as well, Wills said, subject to further discussion between BPA and the COE. There will be more opportunities at that time to discuss the size of fish, a major reason for requesting the low end of 1% operation. TMT added this issue to its agenda for next week, when Dave Wills will present information on fish sizes and the Corps will present the results from the recent gate well study.

#### **5. Bonneville 2<sup>nd</sup> Powerhouse Corner Collector Outage**

The corner collector outage is in progress today for installation of hydrophones along the BGS, as agreed to at last week's TMT meeting, Dan Feil said. The current outage is scheduled to run through 6 pm this evening. If something goes wrong today, some of the hours might be postponed until tomorrow, Scott Bettin (BPA) added. As noted above, only units 14 and 18 are running in the 2<sup>nd</sup> powerhouse. In addition, gatewell testing is occurring in unit 14 and will continue until April 19 or 20.

#### **6. Transport Operations**

Dan Feil reminded TMT that the Walla Walla District needs 3 days of lead time from the date when transportation is to begin. The start of transportation has been a continuing subject of discussion at FPAC, with transportation likely to begin on May 1 this year, Wagner said. If the Salmon Managers anticipate an earlier start date than that, Wagner will let the COE know.

## **7. McNary Navigation Issue**

On Friday, April 11, the COE heard from John Piggot of the Towboaters' Association expressing concern over navigation problems at the McNary lock due to spill patterns, Adams reported. A modified spill pattern similar to that used last summer when similar problems arose was developed and has been used successfully to alleviate navigation problems. Tow boaters have expressed appreciation to the COE, TMT and FPOM for pulling this pattern together.

## **8. Next Meeting**

The next regular TMT meeting will be on April 23. Dworshak operations, the Spring Creek Hatchery May release, transportation planning, Hanford reach, comments on the WMP spring/summer update, nighttime spill at Little Goose, and finalizing the TMT guidelines will be on the agenda. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Tony Norris	BPA
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Jim Adams	COE
Scott Bettin	BPA
Dave Wills	USFWS
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
John Roache	BOR
Richelle Beck	DRA
Rudd Turner	COE
Dan Spear	BPA
Dan Feil	COE
Tim Heizenrader	Centaurus
Jennifer Miller	Susquehanna
Holli Krebs	Bear Stearns
Scott Boyd	COE
Laura Hamilton	COE
Bob Buchholz	COE
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Don Faulkner	COE
Tina Lundell	COE
Mike Butchko	Powerex
Shane Scott	PPC



Bob Diaz  
Tom Le  
Dave Benner  
Bryce Bodacker  
Glen Trager  
Mike Langeslay

PPM  
Puget Sound Energy  
FPC  
Highland Energy  
Shell Energy  
COE